

VZCZCXRO6668
OO RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0479/01 0711747
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 121747Z MAR 06 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2575
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0990
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0837
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC 0430
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1215
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0865
RUEHPU/USDAO PORT AU PRINCE HA
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000479

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2016

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL HA

SUBJECT: HAITI: FORMER PM YVON NEPTUNE SIGNALS WILLINGNESS
TO ACCEPT RELEASE DEAL, IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Classified By: CDA Douglas Griffiths, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune appears ready to negotiate a humanitarian release with the IGOH, after months of numerous attempts by embiffs and other representatives of the international community. During a visit by poloff on March 9, Neptune enumerated three conditions for considering any release agreement: a firm commitment (preferably not in writing) that Preval government would drop the legal charges against him; acknowledgment from the IGOH of wrongs perpetrated against him; and financial means to assist him to recuperate personal property lost after February 29, 2004. He adamantly refused a transitional hospital transfer (referring to the UN Argentinean hospital) but requested a complete medical check-up upon release.

Neptune expressed his wish to return to Long Island, New York where he and his wife own a house, but rejected any deal with stipulations on his return to Haiti. He expressed great concern for his safety in the U.S. because of his cooperation with the DEA that led to the arrests and extraditions of Haitian drug kingpins Jean Eliobert and Jacques Ketant. Both President Boniface Alexandre and President-elect Preval have indicated to Charge Griffiths their hope to resolve Neptune's case before Preval assumes office. If the two sides are able to reach agreement, and Neptune continues to cooperate, his release would provide huge political equity to the Preval government. End Summary.

¶2. (C) President-elect Preval told Charge that he specifically asked Prime Minister Latortue to free Neptune during conversations in late February (NOTE: Charge has been advocating to both sides to resolve the Neptune issue before Preval takes office. END NOTE). Neptune wrote a letter to Preval chronicling his ordeal and explaining his position regarding his release and Preval has spoken publicly about Neptune's case and . Preval and his team told Charge that they would work on a solution. As for the IGOH, President Alexandre maintained that he would not be able to employ any legal solution to the problem, including a pardon, until Neptune's case goes to trial and there is a formal conviction. Alexandre recommended pursuit of a similar path employed in Father Jean-Juste's release, specifically Neptune's legal team requesting a humanitarian release for

medical treatment abroad. Neptune dismissed his legal team in 2004 and has not had legal representation since.

¶13. (C) Despite his continued hunger strike, Neptune appeared energetic and in good health during a visit by poloff on March 9. He spoke frankly and offered admiration and kudos to poloff on her actions to secure Father Jean-Juste's release in January, saying, "I didn't think the interim government would have allowed it to happen!" For the first time in months, Neptune signaled his willingness to participate in negotiations on his release (the last time he participated in a plan brokered by SRSG Valdes and Charge in March 2005, he backed out at the last minute and refused to leave the country). He told poloff that Preval's government should not inherit the burdens of the IGOH and seemed genuinely willing to cooperate, but insisted that he would not formalize anything in writing, neither for his release nor his requests.

¶14. (C) The former PM outlined his requests of both Preval's government and the IGOH to confirm before agreeing to a release deal: a firm commitment (preferably not in writing) that the legal charges against him would be dropped by Preval government after departing Haiti; a formal acknowledgment from the IGOH of wrongs perpetrated against him; and financial means to assist him to recuperate personal property losses he endured after February 29, 2004.

¶15. (C) Neptune spent a great deal of time emphasizing the last point, claiming that he had begun to rebuild his life after President Aristide left Haiti but since his arrest and imprisonment, he lost most of his resources and personal effects. Hard-pressed to assign a monetary value to his

PORT AU PR 00000479 002 OF 002

losses, he said that at the time of his imprisonment, he had \$30 USD in his personal bank account. Neptune demurred on the suggestion of monetary compensation from the IGOH, saying that he didn't want the Haitian people to pay for the faults of the interim government. He was adamant in his refusal to accept a transfer to the UN Argentinean hospital but requested a complete medical check-up upon release, acknowledging that his prolonged hunger strike had probably caused irreparable damage to his internal organs.

¶16. (C) Neptune lamented that he would not have a place to live in Haiti if he were released because his cousin's house in Thomassin, where he stayed in early 2004, had been destroyed. Neptune expressed his wish to return to Long Island, New York where he and his wife own a house, but also rejected any deal with stipulations on his return to Haiti. He wondered about his extended period outside the U.S. and the consequences for his permanent resident status.

¶17. (C) Neptune expressed great concern for his safety in the U.S. based on his cooperation with the DEA country office in Haiti. He said that he agreed to cooperate with investigations and subsequent indictments and extraditions of reputed Haitian drug traffickers Jean Eliobert and Jacques Ketant because refused to be a party to the exploitation and corruption in Haiti at that time. He offered DEA agents direct access to a member of his cabinet, without President Aristide's knowledge and felt that his life could be in jeopardy, especially in the U.S., because of his actions. Poloff promised to raise the concerns, but offered no promises on security or his other demands.

¶18. (C) Comment: Neptune appears to have come to his senses and his signal to cooperate offers cause for hope that his case could be resolved soon. Coupled with Father Jean-Juste's release in January, the success of the elections and the imminent arrival of Preval's government, Neptune probably views this as the most opportune moment to negotiate. We work aggressively with the IGOH, the UN, and Preval's team to get Neptune out of prison before the late-April inauguration. End Comment.

GRIFFITHS